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STATE GOVTS CAN'T MOVE SC AGAINST PREZ AND GUV ON BILLS, SAYS CENTRE

State governments cannot file such writ petitions by claiming to be a repository of the rights of the people, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told SC

SC: HOW CAN ASSENT BE WITHHELD FOREVER?

The Supreme Court's five-judge Constitution bench hearing a Presidential Reference seeking clarity on whether timelines could be imposed on the President and governors for deciding on bills passed by the State legislatures, said the term 'as soon as possible' used in Article 200 of the Constitution will serve no purpose if consent is withheld for "eternity"

PREZ, GUV NOT BOUND BY TIMEFRAME: S-G

- Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Tamil Nadu, said governors and the President are 'titular heads' who have no discretion on executive decision-making, except a very few ones
- S-G Mehta said the Constitution does not envisage judicial directions binding the President or Governors to act within a timeframe

ART 200

DEALS WITH GUV'S ASSENT, WITHHOLDING, RETURNING, OR REFERRING BILLS TO PREZ

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Bhagwat clears the air on retiring @ 75

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

CLEARING the air over his recent remark on retirement at 75, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday said it wasn't aimed at himself or anyone else, alluding to the speculation on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"I never said that I will retire or someone else should retire... We are ready to retire anytime in life and ready to work for as long as the Sangh wants us to do so," he said on the final day of the Sangh's three-day lecture series to mark the centenary celebrations of the RSS.

Reacting to ongoing attempts to reclaim Hindu sites of worship in Kashi and Mathura, he denied the Sangh's participation in it, but added that its volunteers (swayamsevaks) were free to make their own decisions.

Bhagwat also suggested that every Indian family should have three children to keep the population sufficient and under control. "To keep a civilisation alive, India's population policy suggests 2.1 (average number of children), which basically means three. But resources have to be managed too, so we must restrict it to three," he said.

CENTENARY EVENT

On the issue of Hindu Rashtra, Bhagwat said there is no need to declare Bharat a Hindu Rashtra. "It already is. Rishis and munis have already declared it. It does not need any official proclamation," he said, adding the Sangh cannot change its stance that Hindustan is a Hindu nation.

Addressing concerns over foreign funding, he said that there should be no issue if they are used for service work. "But they should be used for that purpose alone. The problem arises when such funds are used for religious conversions. That is why restrictions became necessary."

Commenting on the language debate, Bhagwat said that all of Bharat's languages are national languages. "All the languages of Bharat are national languages. But, there should be one common link language and it should never be a foreign language."

India, Canada thaw as both name envoys

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

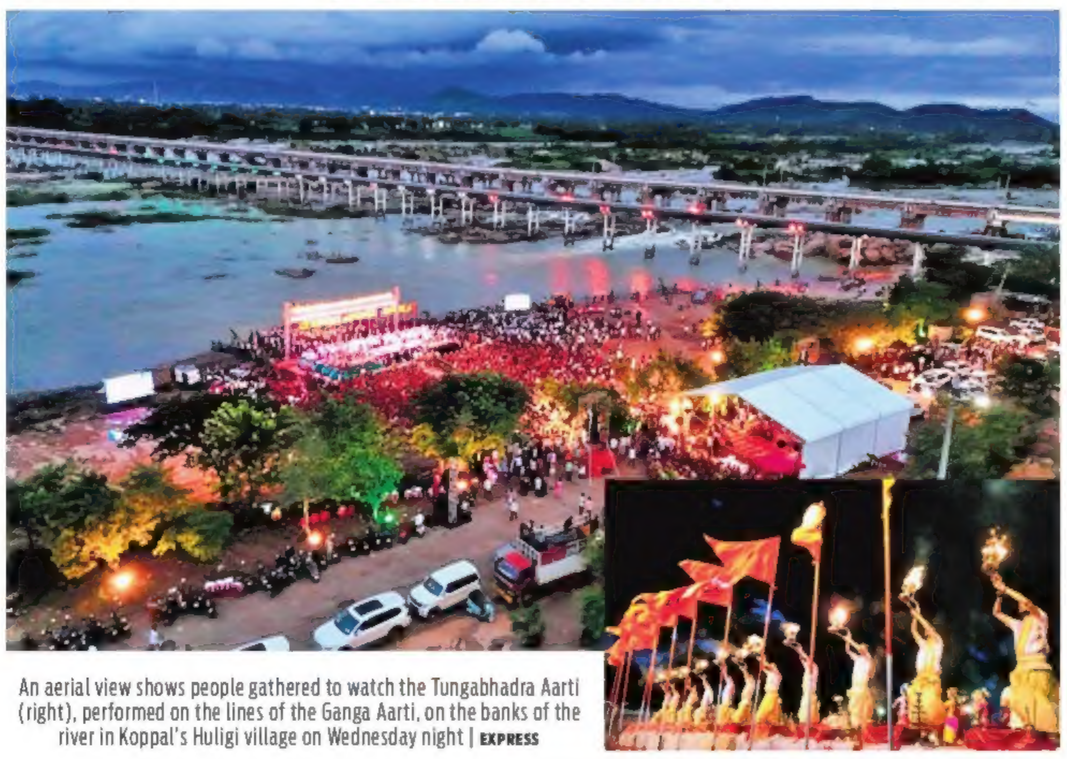
INDIA and Canada on Thursday named senior diplomats Dinesh K Patnaik and Christopher Cooter as their new high commissioners, filling posts that had remained vacant for over 10 months amid one of the most serious diplomatic crises between the two countries.

Patnaik, a 1990-batch Indian Foreign Service officer and currently India's ambassador to Spain, will take up his assignment in Ottawa shortly, the MEA said. Canada's Foreign Minister Anita Anand confirmed the appointment of Cooter as high commissioner to India, calling it an "important step towards restoring necessary diplomatic services to citizens and businesses in both countries."

The appointments mark a cautious step toward normalising ties that had sharply deteriorated following allegations by then Canadian PM Justin Trudeau in September 2023 that Indian government agents were involved in the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, British Columbia. India had dismissed it as "absurd and politically motivated". In the aftermath, both countries halted trade talks, expelled diplomats, and downgraded the functioning of their missions.

Though Canada follows a 120-day process to finalise the agrément—a formal diplomatic approval process—for incoming foreign envoys, in Patnaik's case, the process was expedited. While the deeper political tensions remain unresolved, the restoration of high-level diplomatic representation suggests both sides are now seeking to stabilise the relationship and move toward normalcy.

REVERED RIVER



An aerial view shows people gathered to watch the Tungabhadra Aarti (right), performed on the lines of the Ganga Aarti, on the banks of the river in Koppal's Huligi village on Wednesday night | EXPRESS

If Indians don't budge, I don't think President Trump will: Hassett

Trump's top aides double down on India

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

HARDENING their stance against India over New Delhi's energy trade with Russia and refusal to open up its markets for American corporations, US President Donald Trump's two top economic advisers, Kevin Hassett and Peter Navarro, have issued sharp warnings against India.

Hassett, director, National Economic Council, tied Washington's steep tariffs on Indian goods to New Delhi's stance on Russia. "If the Indians don't budge, I don't think President Trump will," he said, calling trade negotiations with India complicated and criticising India's 'intransigence' in opening up markets.

White House Trade Advisor Navarro bluntly accused India of enabling Russia's war. In an interview to *Bloomberg*, Navarro dubbed the Ukraine conflict 'Modi's war', blaming India for prolonging the fighting by continuing to buy Russian oil.

The duo's sharp remarks signal a renewed hardline posture from the Trump administration as it links trade policy with geopolitical alignment.

"This isn't just about trade," Hassett said. "Part of it has been tied to the pressure we've been trying to put on Russia in order to secure a peace deal and save millions of lives. Then there's the Indian intransigence about opening their markets to our products."

Taking a more provocative line, Navarro said: "Everybody in America loses because of what India is doing... Consumers lose, businesses lose, workers lose because of high Indian tariffs. And the taxpayer? They fund Modi's war."

Navarro also lashed out at India's insistence on sovereign decision-making in energy policy, calling it "arrogant," and accused the country of siding with authoritarians. "India, you're the biggest democracy in the world. Act like one. Side with the democracies," he said, lumping India's Russia and China ties into a broader critique of its foreign policy alignment.

Talks still on at multiple levels: Govt

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

WITH the 50% tariffs officially coming into force, New Delhi has intensified efforts to mitigate the fallout. According to a senior commerce ministry official, discussions are on with exporters as well as officials of the Trump administration.

"Engagements with exporters are going on. Official-level engagements between the two countries are also on," the official said.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and the Ministry of Commerce are jointly coordinating efforts to cushion the impact on exporters.

Speaking to this newspaper, an official said the government is trying to find a way out of the tariff mess and seriously pursuing engagements at multiple levels—diplomatic, political and commercial. The official said the strategies include putting pressure on the Trump administration using the Democrats and businesses there. "Businesses are the ones who are suffering even in the US," said the official.

Meanwhile, separate meetings between ministries and industry representatives are being held. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated dialogues with key trade bodies to address liquidity and financial concerns triggered by the new tariffs. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra had earlier promised exporters that all measures would be taken to deal with the emerging situation.

On Thursday, a delegation from the Federation of Indian Export Organisations met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. According to the federation, Sitharaman assured them that the government would safeguard workers' livelihoods and urged industry leaders to reassure employees about job continuity despite global turbulence.

Exporters, despite being concerned about the impact on their businesses, have largely backed the government's stance of dealing with tariff pressure from Washington.

TARIFF TRACKER

Peter Navarro

Kevin Hassett

Unwavering and unequivocal support for the government's stance on not yielding to the unreasonable and unethical pressure of the reciprocal tariffs imposed on India by the United States

—Sudhir Sekhri, chairman, AEPC

WITH THIS ISSUE

CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE — 42 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

FIR FILED

CLASS 9 STUDENT DELIVERS BABY IN HOSTEL WASHROOM

RAMAKRISHNA BADSESHI @ Yadgir, Kalaburagi

A 17-year-old girl studying in Class 9 of a residential school in Shahapur taluk of Yadgir district, delivered a baby boy in the washroom of the hostel on Wednesday. The residential school is run by the social welfare department.

Executive Director of Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society Kantharaju suspended two teachers — Narasimha Murthy, the Science teacher, and Sridhar, the physical education teacher, with immediate effect. The suspension order stated that the girl's attendance was only 10 per cent in Class 9, and it was the duty of Narasimha Murthy, as class teacher, to report on her attendance, and Sridhar to report on her physical condition to the principal. As they failed to perform their duties, based on a report by the deputy director of the social welfare department, Murthy and Sridhar have been kept under suspension, the order said.

Police registered an FIR based on a complaint by District Child Protection Officer Nirmala against five persons, including an unknown accused (A1), Geeta Salimani, the warden of the school hostel (A2), school principal Basamma (A3), staff nurse Basamma Patil (A4) and Sharanabasavva for not informing officials about a Class 9 student becoming pregnant.

According to the complainant, the girl was not giving any information about A1.

CONTINUED ON P7

EXPRESS READ

Two road mishaps claim eight lives in state

BENGALURU: Eight people died in two accidents on Thursday. Six people were killed when a KSRTC bus hit two autorickshaws and pedestrians near Mangaluru, and two passengers were killed when the bus they were travelling in overturned in Belagavi | P7

West Bengal readies for poll body's SIR rollout

KOLKATA: In an indication of the SIR of poll rolls kicking in soon in Bengal, the state administration on Wednesday instructed the appointment of all electoral registration officers and assistant electoral registration officers within 24 hours | P12

IndiGo lease of Turkish planes extended

NEW DELHI: In a significant development, DGCA has given a six-month extension till February 28, 2026 to IndiGo to operate two leased Boeing 777 aircraft from Turkish Airlines with certain conditions

No place to bury dead, an islet the final resting place

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chikkamagaluru

AROUND 150 families hailing from Shillekytha fishing community (Scheduled Caste) living at Menasuru Ravuru Camp in NR Pura taluk have no place to bury their dead.

These families have been deprived of a burial ground although they have been living in the camp near the backwaters of the Bhadra river for nearly two decades.

The community members are forced to bury the dead in an islet a few kilometres away from their camp. The body of an aged man, who died on Sunday, was taken to the islet on a coracle to perform the last rites.

One of the community members told *TNIE* that they struggle to bury the dead during monsoon. "We find water as we start digging a pit. We cover the pit with leaves to prevent water from seeping in before burying the body there. We faced this problem on Sunday too," he said.

"Sometimes, pits are dug in places where bodies were buried earlier. During summer, the Bhadra backwaters recede and the bodies are buried on the shore," he said.

A body being ferried to the islet on a coracle in the Bhadra backwaters

Another member of the community said, "Our appeals to the gram panchayat, taluk administration, local MLA and other elected representatives to provide us houses, electricity, burial ground and other amenities have gone in vain."

Meanwhile, a local leader said members of the Shillekytha fishing community are basically nomads and they won't live in a particular place for long. It is because of this reason that they have been deprived of basic amenities.

Should Bescom look for a pied piper to tackle frequent power cuts?

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

BENGALURU might be in need of a pied piper. Frequent power cuts in the city do not seem to be merely a result of routine maintenance work but a concerted sabotage by a mischief of rats.

Linemen working with the Bangalore Electricity Supply Corporation Limited (Bescom) say they have been coming across numerous instances of rats nibbling on power cables. "Many a time when we open up the ducts we find rats that have been electrocuted. Incidents of rats nibbling upon the wires are on the rise in recent times," said a lineman working near Palace Grounds.

AI-generated Image

Another lineman from Nagarbhavi said: "Every time there is a power cut complaint, the first thing we check is if the power line is damaged because of rats. We immediately switch off power supply for a large stretch to ensure there are no untoward incidents and then take up repair works."

As per Bescom data, a total of 7,367.45 km of high tension underground cables have been added to the network in BESCOM limits from July 2019 till July 15, 2025. Also, 6,707.63 km of low tension underground cables have been added in the same period.

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